



June 2023

Connecting the DOTs

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Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program

This program dedicates state bridges to South Dakotans who were killed in action while serving their country or classified as missing in action. Naming South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen heroes gives us the opportunity of remembrance, reflection, and respect.

Kenneth DeGroot, CPL (Army)

Memorial sign placed on U.S. Highway 14 eastbound bridge over the Big Sioux River near Volga. CPL DeGroot served in the Korean War, killed in action on Sept. 7, 1951, in North Korea.

Staff from **Aberdeen Region Traffic** placed the memorial sign on Highway 14 on June 13, 2023.

Pictured left to right: John Weigel, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker, and Joshua Harr, Highway Maintenance Worker.

Photos provided by Scott Witlock, Region Operations Technician.





The Secretary's Corner

Click the graphic below to view the AASHTO video showcasing all WASHTO Region projects and announcing 2023 winners.



Transportation infrastructure plays a significant role in everyone's life – getting us to our jobs and connecting communities – creating the quality of life that has come to define our state and nation. America's best transportation projects make a difference for the people and businesses who use them.

The SDDOT recently earned regional honors for two projects in the **2023 America's Transportation Awards (ATA)** given at the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (WASHTO) Annual Meeting. The ATA contest serves as a catalyst to honor state DOTs and the positive impacts their projects bring to communities across the country.

AASHTO, AAA, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce annually recognize the projects and programs that make communities better places to live, work, and play. The awards focus on getting more out of the existing system; implementing new technologies and innovations; and improving overall quality of life to enhance community development. **Now in its 16th year, the ATA helps to showcase why transportation infrastructure, and why properly funding it, is vital.**

"In addressing the transportation challenges of today and tomorrow, state DOTs demonstrate a strong determination to bring innovative solutions to their communities," stated **Jim Tymon, Executive Director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials**. "These projects play a vital role in improving safety, enhancing mobility, and revitalizing transportation resources for drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit customers alike."

SDDOT Projects Earning ATA honors include:

- The U.S. Highway 83 Corridor Improvements and Reconstruction project received an award in the "Quality of Life/Community Development" category.
- The Environmental Sensor and Camera Stations project received an award in the "Best Use of Technology & Innovation" category.

Thank you!

These awards are a testament to the incredible SDDOT employees across the state who work diligently to plan and complete innovative transportation projects to efficiently provide a safe and effective public transportation system.

Visit <https://americatransportationawards.org/> to learn more about this year's WASHTO nominees.

All projects first compete on a regional level against other projects of their own size. After all regional meetings have taken place this summer, the three highest-scoring projects from each region will be named to the "Top 12" to then compete for the top two national prizes.

Governor Noem Appoints Austin Simons and Chris Frick to the South Dakota Transportation Commission

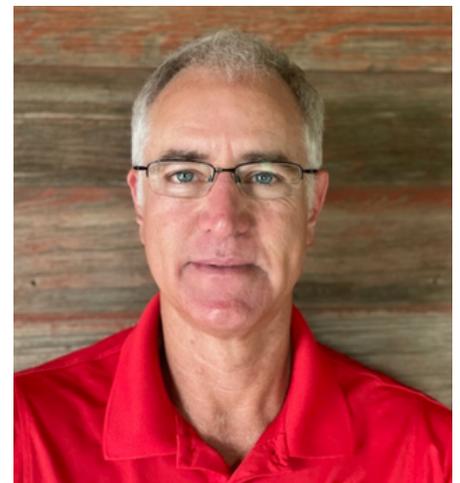
“Our Transportation Commission makes sure that South Dakotans can get where they need to go. They are the ones that keep our state moving,” **said Governor Noem**. “I am confident that these folks will serve in their new roles with the best interest of our citizens at heart. I look forward to working with them.”

Austin Simons is a lifetime resident of South Dakota and has a bachelor’s degree in banking and finance and professional accountancy from Northern State University. He was a public accountant at Cahill Bauer & Associates in Mobridge, South Dakota before going on to become the manager at Thorstenson Trucking, LLC in Selby. In this role, Simons has applied performance data to evaluate and improve operations, target current business conditions, and forecast needs.



Simons will fill the vacant seat of former Commissioner Benj Stoick.

Chris Frick is from Yankton, South Dakota, and has a bachelor’s degree in teaching from the University of Sioux Falls. He worked at a family-owned livestock order-buying business before starting his own livestock market in 1994. Frick went on to work in sales for a wholesale propane company. He is now part owner of an HVAC company.



Frick will fill the vacant seat of former Commissioner Bruce Cull.

Find additional information about the Transportation Commission at <https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/boardmembers.aspx?BoardID=96>.

Transit Services in Martin By Jack Dokken - Air, Rail, & Transit Program Manager

River Cities Public Transit (RCPT) is committed to providing safe, reliable, and courteous public transportation by promoting quality of life, livability, self-sufficiency, and freedom through mobility.

Soon, transit service will be restored in the town of Martin. RCPT is providing an ADA compliant mini-van and a regular mini-van for Martin, and is currently in the process of hiring drivers.

A big thanks to **Andrew Mentele, Transportation Specialist**, who led the effort to restore services by working closely with the Martin community and RCPT staff.



BENNETT COUNTY TRANSIT



WORK



DR APPOINTMENTS



EDUCATION

Where can we take you?



SHOPPING

DESTINATION

We're hiring friendly drivers in Martin!

www.rcptransit.com/martin/

River Cities Public Transit (RCPT) - Highmore Transit Bus Facility By Andrew Mentele, Transportation Specialist

To provide more efficient services to area customers, a bus facility is being built in Highmore. The facility will provide storage opportunities, in addition to staff training rooms and more.

SDDOT staff were on site in June to review construction progress. At this time, backfilling is complete. The building mainframes are going up, and insulation will soon be delivered. The bus facility is expected to be fully operational in the Fall of 2023.

SDDOT transit staff visit the job site on a routine basis and attend bi-weekly project meetings to perform field inspections, ensure the scope of work is being performed, change orders are accurate, payments are concise, and communications are going well with the grant sub-recipient and the contractor.

Once complete, RCPT will operate transit services out of the establishment with oversight by the SDDOT Transit office and the FTA. Bi-annual inspections will continue throughout the useful life of the facility. Funding for this project was obtained by the SDDOT and RCPT partnering together and winning a discretionary grant provided by the Federal Transit Administration!



Southeast corner



Crew working on roof strapping



Northwest corner



Northeast corner



West



Southwest corner



PROCESSES

Finance Corner

Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) Usage and Reimbursement

It was recently clarified that since Fleet & Travel Management (FTM) is the only one able to tell if there are pool vehicles available for all state employees, that FTM will continue to approve all requests for POV usage/reimbursement as stated in the FTM Policy and Procedure Handbook, regardless of the agency.

In the event there are **no agency** vehicles available, **drivers are expected to obtain a motor pool vehicle, if available**. Just because an assigned agency vehicle is not available, this does not constitute a higher rate of POV reimbursement.

If the driver chooses to drive their own vehicles and a motor pool vehicle is available (as determined by FTM), it will be paid at the lower mileage reimbursement rate.

Find the document on the BOA website at <https://boa.sd.gov/fleet-travel/default.aspx>.



Update to Workers' Compensation Claims Process

Effective July 1, 2023, Risk Administration Services, Inc. (RAS) will begin managing Workers' Compensation claims.

The current online process of reporting a First Report of Injury (FROI) will change and the incident will need to be reported by calling an 800 number. The link will be deactivated and a new message will display with the 800 number to call and report a workplace injury.

Wallet cards with the 800 number will be distributed to all Regions and Central Office. The BHR website will also be updated with the 800 number and a new FAQ document in the near future.

Prior to July 1, employees with an open claim will receive a letter from BHR notifying them of this change. The employee will also receive a letter from RAS and Alius who will provide the pharmacy information.

June DOTNET Training . . .

The SDDOT's New Engineer in Training program (**DOTNET**) helps to provide new engineers with a better understanding of the Department's programs and services (from start to finish).

At their most recent meeting, the cohort of 18 engineers, received information about topics in the classroom such as ITS technologies, ROW, and then went on field tours of Hilgers Gulch to discuss environmental topics; and also to the Pierre-Fort Pierre Bridge project.

The Training Department would like to thank everyone who makes these trainings/tours possible! It's great for our DOTNET group to have a behind-the-scenes look at the innovative projects happening throughout our state!

The cohort runs annually from November to November with quarterly meetings. Our next meeting will involve a Field Tour to view projects across the state. Then, we will meet twice more this fall.

DOTNET MISSION

- To share knowledge and expertise from a variety of content experts
- To provide new engineers a better understanding of how the department works, what the roles are of different programs, and the project workflow from beginning to end
- To provide the opportunity to build lasting relationships with other new engineers from various programs in the department.



June Mentoring Minute

You Don't Have to Be a Boss to Be a Leader

Written By JC Dolinger (Submitted by June Hansen & Scott Eisenbeisz)

What is a leader?

Buffy Van Brocklin was a customer service representative at a manufacturing firm. Buffy answered phones, entered customer orders, helped with technical product questions, and was a “go-to” guy, both within the organization and outside the walls with customers and vendors. I don't know how he got the nickname, Buffy, but he was affectionately referred to as “Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” I never saw a problem that Buffy couldn't solve. His tools were patience, some technical prowess, an unquestioned work ethic, and a passion for helping people. While I'm sure it was not anyone's plan, Buffy's daily habits created a “can do” culture within his company, and that culture remains in place today ... several years after his retirement.

Buffy wasn't anybody's boss, in fact, being a manager was never something he aspired to. He was content to do a great job and help his co-workers and customers do the same. And while he was not technically a manager, his presence was critical to the mission of the company. Almost all his human interaction was over the phone, yet, Buffy was “the face” of his company.

That's a leader.

Definitions for leaders and leadership vary from resource to resource. I'll offer up my simple description: A leader is someone who gets things done.

At work, at school, at home, and in our communities, a leader sees a need and fills the need. It's that simple. Not everyone aspires to have a title, not everyone has the need to be a boss. But I believe most of us want to contribute in a positive way, make a difference, and be appreciated for our efforts.

So here are a few things Buffy, and others, have taught me about leadership on my professional journey. A lot of it comes down to good intentions, self-awareness, and some good old common sense. It also helps to have a good leader or mentor to model those leadership traits.

1) **Be Reliable** Show up every day, on time, and ready to work. This “common sense” habit is not just noticed by your managers, it's noticed by your co-workers as well. Being a reliable teammate is one of the first steps in leadership recognition. The best ability is availability. Be there.

2) **Be Flexible** There should never be a job, that's “not my job”. If you can do it, do it. I worked for a gentleman who owned an industrial supply company that did \$50 million in annual sales. Simply put, he was rich! I came back to the office late one night, and he was emptying the office wastebaskets. When I jokingly asked if he had been demoted by his business partner (his wife), he laughed and told me that when they started the business, they knew the key to being successful was to “never be too important to take out the trash.” The cleaning staff had an

Continued . . .

emergency and couldn't make it in that evening, and he did what had to be done. This was such a great lesson for me as a young professional – both in flexibility and humility.

3) **Become an Expert, and know the job.** Know the mission. Know what the end result is supposed to look like. You may have responsibility for a small part of a bigger project, but whenever it's possible, know the whole project. Becoming an expert shows interest and initiative. Being an expert makes you someone that others can turn to for help. Showing interest in the bigger picture creates value. Expertise is always valued.

4) **Share the credit... own the blame** This is sometimes a tough pill to swallow, but it's what great leaders do. In the professional world, we rarely win completely on our own. Whatever the end result is supposed to look like; a workspace realignment, a new product design, a World Series championship...the program analyst, the engineer, or the closing pitcher did not win it on their own. Good leaders will always acknowledge the team before themselves. This is always true. But sometimes you don't win, you don't get the deal, or the project fails to meet its expectations and it may have had nothing to do with your efforts. Good leaders own that blame, and never "point fingers." This is always true. (And it's always tough!)

5) A good leader **praises publicly and loudly, but critiques and corrects quietly and privately.** On this point, we could substitute the word, "leader" with "person." Find a way to make somebody feel good about who they are, and what they are doing, and bring it to other people's attention. A good organization has no unsung heroes! However, if something (or someone) needs improvement or an all-out change of direction, remember to do it privately and with as much compassion as possible. This point applies anywhere in an organization's hierarchy. If you take nothing else from this article, take point #5 and the understanding that everybody is entitled to their dignity.

6) **Showing Passion, being reliable, and showing up** is important, but showing up is just a part of the leadership recipe. Being an expert at your craft, and at the team's mission is also important. But being passionate about being there is vital to your success as a leader. Passion is infectious (but in a good way!!), it's how you affect and improve culture. And while I don't know everything about anything, I do know this: If you can't be passionate about what you're doing during the 8 or more hours of your workday (1/2 of your waking life!), then for your own sake, do something else. Be your own leader. Make passion your personal brand.

Leaders come in lots of different and diverse packages, and many of those packages are not accompanied by a title. You don't have to be a "Division Manager" or "VP of Marketing" to be a leader, you just need to care about what's going on and show that attitude and passion to others. You could be a supply clerk, you could be a regional sales rep, you could be a dude named Buffy the Vampire Slayer ... **(Reprinted with permission by The Training Connection)**

Upcoming July 2023 Mentoring Events:

Construction project tours are scheduled in Rapid City on July 18 and Sioux Falls on July 26!



Biometric Screening Reminder

Maintaining a relationship with your primary care provider leads to better health outcomes. Rather than offering on-site screening events across the state, biometric screenings are now available solely through an annual wellness preventive exam with your primary care provider (PCP). This exam is covered at no cost once per plan year under preventive care, regardless of which health plan you choose.

For this screening to count toward your well-being rewards, you must complete the biometric screening form with your provider, sign, and submit it to Total Wellness by April 1, 2024.

<https://bhr.sd.gov/benefits/LiveWellSD/BiometricScreeningForm.pdf>.

Resources and reward qualifications are available at <https://bhr.sd.gov/benefits/livewellsd/>.

June is Men's Health Awareness Month

Did you know that women go to the doctor twice as often as men each year? Or that only 40% of men go to the doctor when concerned about a serious medical problem? The health plan offers several covered preventive exams and services, including:

- Annual Wellness Preventive Exam
- High blood pressure screening
- HIV screenings
- Cardiovascular disease risk assessment for ages 40-75
- And many more!



Schedule your annual wellness preventive exam today! Find more information on the preventative services page at <https://bhr.sd.gov/benefits/health-plans/preventive-care/index.html>.

Medical FSA and Dependent Care FSA Spending Deadlines

If you have a Medical Flexible Spending Account or a Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account, you have until Sept. 14, 2023, to spend the funds or incur claims.

You will then have until Oct. 28, 2023, to submit those claims. **After that date, the remaining balance of those funds will be forfeited.**

Find additional information about spending accounts at <https://bhr.sd.gov/benefits/HSA-FSA-HRA/FSA/index.html>.

SDDOT Employee News and Updates . . . JUNE RETIREMENTS

Congratulations to **Randy Lee, Sioux Falls Area Project Technician**, who retired after **31 years** with the SDDOT! In the Sioux Falls Area, there is a tradition that all retiring staff attach their nameplate onto the official Retirement Plaque, Randy can be seen in the photo making his retirement "official."



Mike Burrer, Highway Maintenance Worker (Pierre Area) retired after **35 years** with the SDDOT!



Robert Roth, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker in Platte retired with **25 years** of SDDOT service. Presenting Robert with his plaque is **Travis Sparks, Highway Maintenance Supervisor**.



Gene Geffre, Transportation Analyst/ROW Specialist, is pictured with **Road Design Program Manager, Scott Rabern (right)**. Gene was presented with a certificate of appreciation and challenge coin from Governor Noem in recognition of retiring with **35 years** of "remarkable dedication and loyalty to state government".



Steve Crane (right) retired with more than **31 years** with the SDDOT, as a Region Equipment Mechanic in Aberdeen! Steve received his plaque and Governor's proclamation from **Mark Prezler, Shop Forman**.





SDDOT Employee News and Updates . . . JUNE RETIREMENTS

Lyle Hertel, Surfacing Plans Project Engineer (Pierre) retired with nearly 44 years of service to the SDDOT.



Chad Howard, Surfacing Plans Engineer Manager, (left) presented Lyle with his certificate and challenge coin from Gov Noem.



The **Surfacing Plans Office** hosted a retirement gathering for Lyle!



Donny Bawek, Highway Maintenance Worker (Webster), retired after 14 years with the DOT.
Bruce Schroeder, Aberdeen Area Engineer, presented Donny with his longevity plaque.



Meet the **winners of the Demolition Derby** held in Bison on Saturday, June 17, 2023.

Randy Brown (left) is a Standards Engineer in the Pierre office and **Grady Myers** is an Equipment Technician in the Winner office.



June 2023 Longevity:

Curtis Theisen, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker – 25 years (Sioux Falls Area)

Robert Laleman, Surfacing Plans Project Engineer – 25 years (Central Office/ Materials & Surfacing)

Thomas Cordell, Project Technician – 30 years (Watertown Area Engineering)

Melvin Malsam, Highway Maintenance Supervisor – 30 years (Aberdeen Area)

Dana Svendsen, Pilot – 30 years (Central Office/ State Hangar)

Rodney Larson, Transportation Project Manager - 35 years (Pierre Area Engineering)



Clark Guthrie, Region Operations Technician, was recently presented his **35-year** pin by **Hannah Covey, Pierre Region Traffic Engineer (left)**.



Rodney Larson, Transportation Project Manager (Pierre Area Engineering) received his **35 year** longevity pin from **Dan Vockrodt, Engineering Manager (right)**.



Curt Theisen, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker in Sioux Falls received his **25 year** Longevity Pin from **Keith Voegeli, Sioux Falls Highway Maintenance Supervisor (right)**.



Melvin Malsam, Highway Maintenance Supervisor, received his **30 year** longevity recognition from **Bruce Schroeder, Aberdeen Area Engineer (left)**.



Tom Cordell, Project Technician (Watertown) received his 30 year longevity recognition from **Jeff Brink, Watertown Area Engineering Supervisor**.



SDDOT Employee News and Updates



June New Hires:

Sydney Huotari, Environmental Planner - Pierre
 Matthew Konda, Highway Maintenance Worker - Sioux Falls
 Brock Heying, Surface Plans Project Engineer - Pierre
 Josh Waagen, Journey Transportation Technician - Huron
 Jason Oedekoven, Highway Maintenance Worker - Belle Fourche
 Shawn Beck, Highway Maintenance Worker - Clear Lake
 Robert Heupel, Highway Maintenance Worker - Aberdeen
 Cody Olson, Highway Maintenance Worker - McIntosh
 Thomas Fischer, Bituminous Lab Journey Tech - Pierre
 Joshua Thayer, Highway Maintenance Worker - Rapid City
 Blake Messegee, Structural Engineer - Pierre
 Jacob Utecht, Structural Engineer - Pierre

June Promotions & Lateral Position Changes:

Ariana Griffey, Structural Team Lead Engineer - Pierre
 Jesse Spitzer, Highway Maintenance Worker - Webster
 Bruce Van Zee, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker - Platte



My name is **Sandie Koehler**. I joined the **Training Department** in May as the **Training Specialist**. My professional background stems from 18 years in multi-family property management which included local, regional, and national roles in training, operations, marketing, and management.

My husband Justin and I have two children - Jace (11) and Rylee (5), two cats, and a newly adopted German Shephard mix puppy. We moved from Colorado to the family ranch between Midland/Philip last year. I am a Wyoming native (Go Pokes!) who loves sports, playing board games, and reality tv. I was instantly attracted to the culture and collaboration at the DOT. I look forward to creating impactful and intentional trainings for you.

Wyatt Reis from Gregory Squadron Post #6 is the newly elected Vice Commander for the Detachment in the Sons of the American Legion. The exchanging of the hat ceremony was conducted by Gregory Post #6 Commander Gene Opbroek.

Wyatt is the Lead Highway Maintenance Worker in Bonesteel.



SDDOT Employee News and Updates

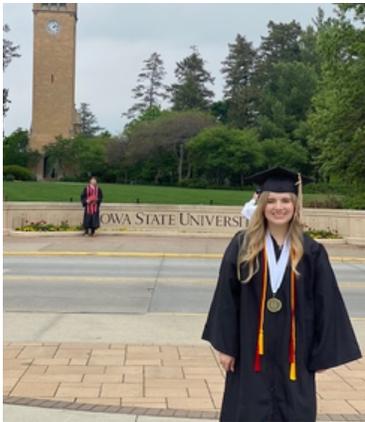
Rebecka M. Wallingford, Grant and EV Coordinator, and her 8-year-old son Leo were recently featured in the Bennett County Newspaper.

Rebecka noted, "American Legion Post 240 presented us with a flag in honor of my Dad's (James Riley Wallingford) service in the US Army during Vietnam. It was given to us during the Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans presentation during the Memorial Day Service in Martin."



Elizabeth Autumn Voegeli graduated from Iowa State University with a double major, Finance and Finance Management and a Minor in Apparel and Merchandising Design.

Elizabeth is the daughter of Keith and Tami Voegeli. **Keith is the Highway Maintenance Supervisor in Sioux Falls.**



Meet Rhys Martin Bollinger!

Rhys was born on May 12, 2023. He weighed 8 lbs. 7oz. and was 21 inches in length.

Rhys is the son of SDDOT employees:

Ariana Griffey - Structural Team Lead Engineer; Bridge Design and Ryon Bollinger - Grading Design Engineer; Road Design.



Meet Abigail Laine Bittle!

Abigail was born on June 16, 2023. She weighed 6 lbs. 15 oz. and was 20 inches in length.

Abigail is the daughter of **Krystal Marquardt** and Heath Bittle. **Krystal is the Secretary in the Office of Bridge Design.**



In Sympathy . . .

Sympathy is extended to the friends, family and co-workers of **Lyle Norling, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker in Beresford**. He worked for the SDDOT for 18 years.

Lyle passed away on June 13, 2023, after a five-month battle with cancer. Funeral services were held on June 17, 2023.



Lyle is pictured with his co-workers at the Mitchell Region Winter Recap/Celebration event in May.



Sympathy is extended to **Luke Neville, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker, Philip**, on the passing of his father, Lee Ike Neville, of Rapid City, formerly of Milesville, SD.

Luke's father died on May 9, 2023. Memorial services were held on May 19, 2023, at the American Legion Hall in Philip.



Sympathy is extended to the family, friends, and SDDOT co-workers of Jim Kotz. Jim, a former Winner Area employee, passed away on May 27, 2023.

Funeral services were held at Grace Methodist Church in Presho on June 2, 2023. Burial followed the services at the Presho City Cemetery.



Sympathy is extended to **Lyle Hertel, Surfacing Plans Project Engineer (Pierre)**, on the passing of his father. Lawrence Hertel of Sturgis passed away on June 2, 2023.

A funeral service was held in Rapid City on June 8, 2023, with burial at Black Hills National Cemetery.